

**SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS**

**NORTHERN HILLS TRAINING CENTER
Continuous Improvement Monitoring Process Report 2004**

SEP Reviewer: Ann Larsen, Special Education Programs

Dates of On Site Visit: April 20-21, 2004

Date of Report: May 17, 2004

This report contains the results of the self-assessment and the validation of the self-assessment by Special Education Programs. The report addresses six principles – General Supervision, Free Appropriate Public Education, Appropriate Evaluation, Procedural Safeguards, Individualized Education Program and Least Restrictive Environment. Each principle is rated based on the following scale:

Promising Practice	The agency exceeds this requirement through the implementation of innovative, high-quality programming and instructional practices.
Meets Requirements	The agency consistently meets this requirement.
Needs Improvement	The agency has met this requirement but has identified areas of weakness that left unaddressed may result in non-compliance.
Out of Compliance	The agency consistently does not meet this requirement.
Not applicable	In a small number of cases, the standard may not be applicable for your agency. If an item is not applicable, the steering committee should briefly explain why the item is NA. Example – no private schools within the district boundaries.

Principle 1 – General Supervision
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General supervision means the agency's administrative responsibilities to ensure federal and state regulations are implemented and a free appropriate public education is provided for each eligible child with a disability. The specific areas addressed in principle one are child find, referral procedures, children voluntarily enrolled by parents in private schools, students placed by the agency, improving results through performance goals and indicators (assessment, drop out, graduation), professional development, suspension and expulsion rates.

Promising Practice

Regular newspaper and television releases about activities of Northern Hills Training Center are part of their efforts to inform the general public and potential recipients of special services about the programs offered by the agency.

Meets requirements

The reviewer identified the agency does not conduct child find activities. Referrals for admission are received from local school districts, the Department of Social Services, the Department of Human Services, the Department of Corrections, individuals and their families. When referrals for special

education students are received from someone other than the local school district, Northern Hills Training Center refers these students to the local school district for the referral process. Procedures for referral, evaluation, eligibility, and placement are completed by the local school district prior to any involvement in Northern Hills Training Center programs. There are no agency students enrolled in private schools. According to the comprehensive plan, the agency suspension and expulsion policies meet state and federal regulation.

The goals and objectives for students are not specifically aligned with the South Dakota content standards/ functional standards, but are based on functional assessment and relate to student transition life planning outcomes. Many can relate to functional standards such as learning how to use a checkbook or follow cooking directions by using correct measuring of ingredients. All supported individuals at Northern Hills Training Center were above the age of required statewide assessment.

Needs improvement

Personnel at Northern Hills Training Center have special education certification, however; all certifications have lapsed. Currently, no one on staff holds a current special education certification. All IEP team meetings must include at least one special education teacher of the student or, if appropriate, at least one special education provider of the student. Three files contained local school district special education teacher participation; however; one file did not have a special education teacher listed. The presence of a certified special education teacher on staff would ensure this part of the IEP team membership is covered.

Principle 2 – Free Appropriate Public Education

All eligible children with disabilities are entitled to a free appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment. The specific areas addressed in principle two are the provision of FAPE to children residing in group homes, foster homes, or institutions, making FAPE available when a child reaches his/her 3rd birthday and providing FAPE to eligible children with disabilities who have been suspended or expelled from school for more than 10 cumulative days.

Meets requirements

A review of student files indicates students are provided services in accordance with their IEP. The agency keeps detailed documentation of services. Related services addressed in student individual education programs are provided. Progress is shared with parents at least quarterly. The agency comprehensive plan addresses procedures for students who may be suspended or expelled, including the provision of a free appropriate education. The agency has not suspended or expelled a student for more than 10 school days.

Principle 3 – Appropriate Evaluation

A comprehensive evaluation is conducted by a team of knowledgeable staff, which also includes parental input. A valid and reliable evaluation will result in effective individualized education programs for eligible students. The specific areas addressed in principle three are written notice and consent for evaluation, evaluation procedures and instruments, eligibility determination, reevaluation and continuing eligibility.

Meets requirements

According to the Northern Hills Training Center's comprehensive plan, if a reevaluation is required during the period of receiving special services at Northern Hills Training Center the agency will work with local school district personnel to ensure compliance with the provisions of this section.

Out of Compliance

24:05:30:04. Prior notice and parent consent. Written notice which meets the requirements of § 24:05:30:05 must be given to the parents five days before the district proposes or refuses to initiate or change the identification, evaluation, or educational placement of the child or the provision of a free appropriate public education to the child. The five-day notice requirement may be waived by the parents. If the notice described in this section relates to an action proposed by the district that also requires parental consent, the district may give notice at the same time it requests parent consent.

24:05:30:05. Content of notice. The notice must include the following:

- (1) A description of the action proposed or refused by the district, an explanation of why the district proposes or refuses to take the action, and a description of any other options the district considered and the reasons why those options were rejected;
- (2) A description of each evaluation procedure, test, record, or report that the district uses as a basis for the proposal or refusal;
- (3) A description of any other factors which are relevant to the district's proposal or refusal;
- (4) A statement that the parents of a child with a disability have protection under the procedural safeguards of this article and, if this notice is not an initial referral for evaluation, the means by which a copy of a description of the procedural safeguards can be obtained; and
- (5) Sources for parents to contact to obtain assistance in understanding the provisions of this article.

Northern Hills Training Center conducts yearly ICAP assessments on their supported individuals. All individual evaluations require prior notice and parent or adult consent. Prior written notice with the required content is not provided by Northern Hills Training Center. Prior written consent before evaluations was not found by the reviewer. Parents or adult supported individuals need to be notified concerning what evaluations will be completed and have the opportunity to provide input into the evaluation process.

Principle 4 – Procedural Safeguards

Parents of children with disabilities have certain rights available. The agency makes parents aware of these rights and makes sure they are understood. The specific areas addressed in principle four are adult student/transfer of rights, content of rights, consent, written notice, confidentiality and access to records, independent educational evaluation (IEE), complaint procedures, and due process hearings.

Meets requirements

The agency has procedures within the comprehensive plan which meet the requirements of surrogate parent appointments. The agency comprehensive plan has policies and procedures for responding to complaint and due process hearings.

Out of compliance

24:05:30:06.01. Procedural safeguards notice -- Availability. A copy of the procedural safeguards available to the parents of a child with a disability must be given to the parents, at a minimum:

- (1) Upon initial referral for evaluation;

- (2) Upon each notification of an individualized education program meeting;
- (3) Upon reevaluation of the child; and
- (4) Upon receipt of a request for a due process hearing under this chapter.

Through a review of student files and interviews with staff, the reviewer found the agency does not provide a copy of the procedural safeguards notice to parents/adult students when initiating evaluations and meetings.

Principle 5 – Individualized Education Program

The Individualized Education Program (IEP) is a written document for a child with a disability that is developed, reviewed and revised by the IEP team, which includes the parent. The specific areas addressed in principle five are IEP team, IEP content, transition components for secondary IEPs, annual reviews, transition from early intervention program, and IEP related issues.

Meets requirements

Northern Hills Training Center uses the state suggested IEP format which covers all required content. Transition plans are developed as a coordinated set of activities based on the transition needs of the student. The agency solicits the involvement of the district responsible for the student placed at Northern Hills Training Center. Contacts are made with the parents to secure their involvement as well.

Principle 6 – Least Restrictive Environment

After the IEP is developed or reviewed, the IEP team must decide where the IEP services are to be provided. Consideration begins in the general education classroom for school age students. The specific areas addressed in principle six are placement decisions, consent for initial placement, least restrictive environment procedures, preschool children, and LRE related issues.

Promising practice

The Northern Hills Training Center has a community service club sponsored by the local Kiwanis organization called the AKTION Club. Approximately 30 members participate in the club. Some of the service projects they have organized and participated in include Special Olympics, care packages for the 842nd troops, the local shelter working against violence, and a prayer breakfast. This is an opportunity provides an outstanding way for the Northern Hills Training Center supported individuals to contribute to the community in which they live.

In addition to the service club, Northern Hills Training Center is organizing a community play. The agency will produce the play and the production will be integrated with members of the community. The performance will take place at the playhouse. This will be a great opportunity for the supported individuals from the Center to have genuine quality interaction with other community members.

Northern Hills Training Center also has a mobile wireless computer lab that is open to supported individuals every Tuesday and Thursday afternoon. The reviewer noted individuals writing emails to family and friends, looking at various web sites, word processing, and playing various computer games

during the visit. A couple of the supported individuals at the Center assist other individuals and teach them skills during this time as well.

Meets requirements

In visiting with supported individuals who attend Northern Hills Training Center, they commented on some of the activities outside of the Center they participate in, as well as noting places they enjoyed visiting and other activities they pursued, such as going out for pizza or attending movies. One individual even commented on attending a class possibly next semester at Black Hills State University.

Needs improvement

Through file reviews and in interview, the reviewer noted the IEPs did contain justification for placement statements. The team did address why they determined the placement was the least restrictive environment, however, the team did not provide written descriptions of the options considered and the reasons why those options were rejected for each placement alternative considered for the student.